



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

A crow sang in the groves,  
Where the proud were in disputation :  
Of one condition is every body in death.

A crow sang from the top of the wood,  
In the hearing of all the birds of the groves :  
The wise will devote himself to God.

A crow sang her saying in a corner  
To such as were found in computation :  
No danger is equal to that of bad company.

A crow sang her saying from the top of the ash  
To birds that were misers :  
Poor is every body that sees not when he has enough.

A crow sang her saying in the desert  
To such as was her companion :  
Happiness is inclination without hope.

A crow sang her saying discreetly  
To such as went not according to their understanding :  
A feast is no feast at the cost of another.

A crow sang her saying to her chick,  
Of those who went to live together :  
Every thing loves its kind.

A crow sang her saying with prudence  
To such as she found irrational :  
To the blind it is useless to hold a candle.

*So sang Catwg the Wise.*

---

## GWILYMIANA.—No. I.

---

THROUGH the kindness of a correspondent we are enabled to promise our readers, under the title prefixed to this article, occasional translations of the poems of Davydd ab Gwilym, on whom the appellations of the Ovid and the Petrarch of Wales, but the latter, we think, with the greater propriety,

have been indiscriminately bestowed. With the exception of a few specimens of his effusions in the last volume of the *Cambrian Register*, we are not aware, that the works of this bard have ever appeared in an English dress. The writer of the following version, therefore, has no small claim on the thanks of our readers for his attempt to extend an acquaintance with one of the most favoured votaries of the *Awen*; and it is almost superfluous to add, that his first specimen affords a happy proof of the success, with which he has caught the playful humour of the original.

As no opportunity has hitherto occurred for saying much in the *CAMBRO-BRITON* respecting *Davydd ab Gwilym*, a cursory view of his life may form an appropriate, and not unacceptable, introduction to the *GWILYMIANA*. We can promise, however, little, if any thing, more than an abridgement of what has been already so very ably written on this subject\*.

#### MEMOIR OF DAVYDD AB GWILYM.

*CARDIGANSHIRE* has the honour of being the place of our poet's nativity; for it appears, that he was born, about the year 1340, at *Llanbadarn Vawr* in that county. By the paternal line, however, he belongs to the other division of the Principality, as his father, *Gwilym Gam*, claimed to be a descendant of *Llywarch ab Bran*, head of one of the Fifteen Tribes of North Wales, and brother-in-law of the celebrated *Owain Gwynedd*. The poet's mother was *Ardudvul*, sister of *Llywelyn ab Gwilym Vychan*, a person of distinguished note in the county of *Cardigan*.

Whatever may have been *Davydd ab Gwilym's* pretensions to an illustrious descent, there is reason to believe, that his birth was illegitimate, or, at least, that the union of his parents, if it had been previously sanctioned by law, had not received the countenance of their friends. At no distant period, however, a reconciliation must have been effected, as the embryo bard was taken, in his infancy, under the protection of his uncle *Llywelyn ab Gwilym*, who became his tutor, and seems to have discovered in him the early indi-

\* We allude to the very interesting *Memoir of Davydd ab Gwilym*, prefixed to the Edition of his works, published in 1789, from the pen of *Mr. Owen Pughe*, and to which the present humble attempt is almost wholly indebted for any little merit it may possess.

cations of that particular talent, for which he was subsequently so conspicuous, and in the cultivation of which he afforded his young *élève* every encouragement. About the age of 15 Davydd ab Gwilym returned to his parents, with whom, however, he appears to have resided but a short time, owing, as it would seem, to the continual bickerings that took place between them, the consequence, in all probability, of the young bard's satirical propensities. But, be this as it may, we find him at an early age again separated from his natural guardians, and enjoying, at Maesaleg in Monmouthshire, the patronage and friendship of Ivor Hael, a relative of his father, and an ancestor of the present house of Tredegar.

Ivor, deservedly styled *Hael*, or *The Generous*, treated his young kinsman with an affectionate kindness, which he even carried so far as to appoint him his steward and the instructor of his only daughter, although his qualifications for these duties were not, it is most probable, of the most obvious description. At least, the inconvenient consequences of one of these appointments were too soon apparent in the mutual attachment, that grew up between the poet and his fair charge. What the conduct of Ivor towards the former was on the discovery of this circumstance is not now known; but he is reported to have lost no time in immuring his daughter within a convent in the island of Anglesey. Thither she was followed by her devoted swain, who, in the capacity of a servant at a neighbouring monastery, consoled himself for some time by offering to his mistress the willing tributes of his love-sick muse. At length, however, weary alike of this barren enjoyment and of his fruitless fidelity, he returned to the hospitable mansion of his patron; and the welcome reception, he appears to have experienced there, does not allow us to suppose, that his affection for the daughter had produced any serious displeasure on the part of the father, however, from motives of prudence, the latter might have thought proper to discountenance the attachment.

During this, his second, residence with Ivor, our poet must, in all likelihood, have bestowed much attention on the cultivation of his favourite pursuit, since we find him, about this time, elected to fill the post of Chief Bard of Glamorgan, which had then something more than a mere nominal import-

ance. His poetical reputation made him also a welcome, and, in some respects, a necessary, guest at the festivals, which, in those long-vanished days of social cheer and princely hospitality, were common in the houses of the first orders in Wales. The mansions of Ivor Hael and Llywelyn ab. Gwilym were the frequent scenes of these festive assemblies, at which particular respect was shewn to the sons of the *Awen*, and where Davydd ab Gwilym seems to have had the first opportunities of signalizing himself amongst his bardic compeers. It was at Emlyn, the seat of his uncle Llywelyn, that the enmity, which existed between him and Rhys Meigan, a brother bard, had its origin, and which was the cause, in some poetical contests, that afterwards took place between them, of mutual attacks of the most virulent character. The laurel, however, in this war of personalities, was finally awarded to Davydd ab Gwilym, whose antagonist is even reported to have fallen dead on the spot, a victim to the unendurable poignancy of our poet's satire. Strange and incredible as this incident may appear, it is, in a great measure, confirmed by our poet himself in one of his productions, wherein he alludes with some minuteness to the extraordinary occurrence\*.

The other particulars of our poet's life, that are traditionally known or that may be collected from his writings, relate chiefly to his general attachment to the fair sex, amongst whom, whether on account of his personal attractions, which are represented as having been of a superior nature, or of the charms of his muse, he appears to have had many admirers. Under such circumstances it is not surprising, that a person of his disposition should have been involved in several adventures of gallantry. Tradition has preserved the memory of one in particular, too long to be here recorded, the extravagance of which, if authentic, proves at once the extent of his amours and the occasional levity of his conduct in this respect.

In two instances, however, he seems to have entertained a sincere and, perhaps, an honourable, passion, the objects of which, under the apparently fictitious names of Dyddgu and Morvudd, he has celebrated in some of his most fascinating effusions. But in both cases the result was, unluckily, unpropitious to his

\* See "Davydd ab Gwilym's Poems," No. 125, and also the poem, preceding it, by Gruffydd Grug, No. 124.

hopes. The former lady, who is represented to have been endowed with the fairest graces both of person and mind, seems to have proved inaccessible to all the overtures of his heart, enforced, as they were, by all the fascinations of his muse. Morvudd, the other favourite, was the daughter of Madog Llawgam, of Anglesey, and has been justly denominated the Laura of our Cambrian Petrarch. To her he was united by a marriage, somewhat irregularly solemnized, indeed, even for the laxity of that age, and continued to live with her until she was, at length, snatched from him by her parents, who gave her hand, in a more formal and binding manner, to one Cynvrig Cynin, an old dotard, whose wealth was his sole recommendation. The bard's mortification at this event, and his inextinguishable passion for Morvudd, appear from several of the poems, which he has dedicated to her, and which contain also many strokes of caustic ridicule against her decrepid spouse, upon whom he invariably bestows the name of *Bwa Bach*, or the Little Hunchback. But Davydd ab Gwilym does not appear to have been satisfied with such revenge only as his muse could supply; for he employed every expedient to procure an interview with his mistress, and at length succeeded in bearing her away from her husband. The lovers, however, were soon overtaken; and a heavy penalty was the reward of our bard's dexterity, his inability to pay which occasioned him to be consigned to a prison, where he might have ended his days but for the generosity of some of his countrymen in Glamorgan, who, by discharging the fine, gave a convincing proof of the general esteem, in which he was held. Nor did the poet himself ever forget the debt of gratitude he owed, on this account, to his liberal benefactors\*.

Among the poetical cotemporaries of our bard, with whom he had formed a particular intimacy, was Gruffydd Grug, a native of Anglesey, eminently distinguished as a favourite of the *Awen*. A sort of amicable rivalry took place between them, which gave birth to many spirited productions on both sides, some of which have survived to the present day†. At

\* The bard often takes occasion, in his poems, to advert to this benevolent deed of the inhabitants of Glamorgan; and two of his effusions (No. 93, and No. 11, of the Appendix) are written expressly on the occasion.

† These are 29 in number, and are preserved among the Poems of Davydd ab Gwilym.

length, however, the contest assumed a more hostile character, and might have terminated in the total extinction of their friendship, had not such an event been averted by the ingenious stratagem of one Bola Bauol, who contrived to convey to each of the rival bards a report of his opponent's death, which had the anticipated effect of producing from both a reciprocal expression of regret, as well as an interchange of elegiac effusions, adapted to the supposed mournful occasion in all the fulness of genuine sorrow. The discovery of this venial fraud, and of the mutual sentiments it had called forth, was the cause of a reconciliation between the contending poets, and of a renewal of their original friendship with a sincerity, that secured its continuance during the rest of their lives.

Of the latter years of our bard's existence we have only a general account, which states, that they were consumed in his native parish of Llanbadarn, and where also had been his paternal home. His parents, however, were now no more; and he had also experienced the misery of surviving all the rest of his nearest friends, amongst whom were to be numbered his two generous patrons and the fair Morvudd. His maternal uncle, Llywelyn, he lost, while yet young, by the act of an assassin, and his muse was taught to bewail him with an affectionate sorrow. One of his poems on this occasion (for it may reasonably be presumed, from the prolific character of his muse, that he wrote more than one) is still extant, and bears ample testimony to the grateful tenderness of his feelings. Ivor Hael and his family, to whom, while living, his poetical talent had ever been devoted, were also remembered, in their death, in some of his most plaintive strains, which, with respect to Ivor himself in particular, expressed with fidelity the language of the heart. But it was Morvudd, the ill-fated, the never-forgotten, Morvudd, at whose shrine the adorations of his muse were made with the greatest frequency, and with the most fervent devotion. One hundred and nine of his poems, and those generally of greater length than what Petrarch dedicated to his Laura, are still preserved; and we know from his own authority, that he wrote at least thirty-eight more on this favourite and inexhaustible theme\*. None of his effu-

\* It is generally considered, because the poet himself calls one of his poems the 147th, that he wrote no more; but this is by no means a necessary conclusion. The poem, indeed, which immediately follows, in

sions, however, on her death are now extant, though it is probable, that, in the pensive tranquillity of his declining age, he must have devoted some strains to this mournful subject. For, we find, from his own testimony, that the Muse did not desert him even in his last moments: on the awful bed of death he sought in the consolations of her voice the sweet music of that Hope, whose home is in heaven. One of his effusions on this impressive occasion remains, and is entitled "The Death-bed Song of the Bard \*."

We have now arrived at the close of our poet's earthly career, and we may say of him, as of the swan, that he closed his life with a song. But, unlike the swan, his tuneful talent was not confined to the hour of dissolution: on the contrary,

————— *Servatur ad inum*

*Qualis ab incæpto processerit, et sibi constat.*

His death is reported to have taken place, about the year 1400, in Anglesey, according to some accounts, but, according to others of a more probable nature, at his home in Llanbadarn. His ashes repose at Ystrad Flur in the county of Cardigan; and his tomb has not wanted the tributary gift of the *Awen*. Some kindred spirit has recorded on it his friendship for the bard and his sorrow for his death in an epitaph, of which the following version affords but an imperfect idea:—

Gwilym, bless'd by all the Nine,  
Sleep'st thou, then, beneath this tree;  
'Neath this yew, whose foliage fine  
Shades alike thy song and thee?

Mantling yew-tree! he lies near,—  
Gwilym, Tivy's Nightingale †;  
And his song too moulders here,  
Ever tuneless through the vale.

Of the character and poems of Davydd ab Gwilym we have

his works, the one called the 147th, is entitled "The last Poem to Morvudd," and may therefore be presumed to have been written subsequently. It is probable, then, that the whole number, written on this subject, considerably exceeded even 147.

\* See his "Poems," p. 495, No. 246.

† In the original *Eos Tivri: Eos Dyred*, however, or the Dimetian Nightingale, was the appellation, by which our bard was frequently known.



not space to say much. The former has been variously represented: tradition ascribing to him a purity of manners and a correctness of conduct, which, to judge from his writings, he did not always evince. It may not, however, be fair, in all cases, to condemn the man on account of the failings of the poet; and Davydd ab Gwilym's life may possibly have illustrated the injustice of such an act. What he wrote in the warmth or in the thoughtlessness of his poetical inspirations may have been discountenanced by the gravity of his cooler reflections. Yet it must at last be admitted, that this is but an hypothesis, which it is now too late to establish or to refute. One thing we may with certainty affirm, that, whatever may be the complexion of the greatest part of his surviving effusions, there are not wanting in others the most satisfactory evidence of a sound moral and religious feeling, highly creditable to the memory of the bard.

Of the merit of his poems it is scarcely necessary to speak: the meed of praise, awarded by the poet's cotemporaries, has received the sanction of four centuries. One peculiarity, however, it may be proper to notice, and more especially as it belongs, in an essential manner, to the character of the Welsh tongue. This is the remarkable nicety, with which he almost always adapts the diction to his particular theme. Pre-eminent as the advantages are, which his language afforded in this respect, he has availed himself of them with an effect, which is hardly conceivable. Thus, nothing can exceed, in harmonious sweetness, some of his love-poems; while, on the other hand, as, for instance, in his description of a thunder storm, the sound is accommodated to the sense with the most appalling precision. The bard is also regarded, though with what justice we pretend not to decide, as the inventor of the *Cywydd*, which has, since his time, become a favourite form of composition. To this we may add, that, besides the singular merit of his versification, his poems are often pregnant with deep thought, bold figurative inventions, and with those delicate touches of fancy, that peculiarly mark the gifted mind, and can only be properly appreciated where they are thoroughly felt.

In bringing to a close this cursory Memoir of Davydd ab Gwilym, we wish briefly to notice his general accomplishments. In this point of view his poems supply many proofs

of his learning, at least of such learning, as that age was qualified to afford. Allusions to the works of Greece, Rome, and modern Italy occur not infrequently in his writings, and, in some cases, where his knowledge could not have been derived through the medium of a translation. With the poetry of Petrarch he appears, in particular, to have been well acquainted; and the congeniality of disposition, discoverable in the two poets, as well as the painful resemblance of their fates, may naturally account for such a partiality. On one occasion, it deserves also to be noticed, he appears to have given a paraphrastic version of one of the Odes of Horace\*; and passages of the Iliad are often the objects of his allusion. With these his classical attainments (as we may not improperly call them) he united the national accomplishment of playing upon the harp, which he seems to have first learnt, at an early age, under the tuition of his kinsman, Llywelyn ab Gwilym; and it appears, from one of his poems, that he was fond of administering, in this manner, to the gratification of his female acquaintance. Of the person of our bard we have already incidentally spoken: it is described as remarkable for its elegance and symmetrical beauty; and he is thought to have been not insensible to the means of displaying it to the best advantage. In a word, shortly to sum up our imperfect narrative, Davydd ab Gwilym appears to have possessed, in a favoured degree, the graces both of person and mind, which, allied, as they were, to a pre-eminent poetical genius, contributed to render him one of the most remarkable characters of the age, in which he lived, and which he may, without exaggeration, be said to have adorned.

---

#### GWILYMIANA.

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE BARD AND A MAID†.

*B.* GOOD day to you, my lovely Maid!

*M.* Welcome the cuckoo's rhyming blade!

\* Compare the 226th Poem in the Edition of his works with the 10th Ode of the 4th Book of Horace.

† See the "Poems" No. 180, p. 359. We regret that we cannot gratify our correspondent's wish by allowing the original to accompany his version. The space, it would occupy, would itself be a sufficient objection, even, if it were not, at all times, our anxious desire to consult, as much as possible, the convenience of our English readers.—Ed.